

Preparing for Winter Storms, Floods, Tornadoes & Lightning



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Preparing for Winter Storms

Winter storms can range from moderate snow over a few hours to blizzard conditions with blinding, wind-driven snow or freezing rain that lasts several days.

The time to prepare is before the snow falls and ice forms.

The first step is to listen for “Watch” and “Warning” alerts from the National Weather Service.

A Winter Storm Watch

A storm watch indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area.

A Winter Storm Warning

A winter storm warning indicates that severe winter weather is in your area or is expected imminently.

Preparing for Winter Storms

- Tune to your weather radio, AM/FM radio, or television to hear the latest updates and information.
- Have appropriate cold weather clothing available.
- If you have a kerosene heater, refuel your heater outside and remember to keep it at least three feet from flammable objects.
- Have rock salt and sand on hand for traction in ice.

- Fill your gas tank before the snow starts falling.
- Keep an emergency auto kit readily available.
- Make sure your fireplace functions properly.

During a Winter Storm

- Wear several layers of loose fitting, light weight, warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing.
- Wear mittens rather than gloves.
- Wear a warm, woolen cap on your head.
- Conserve on fuel by reducing the internal temperature in your home.
- Do not overexert yourself if shoveling snow.
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia.
- Do not use charcoal or gas grills to cook or heat indoors.

If in your vehicle...

- Stay on the main roads.
- If you must stop your vehicle, remain inside the vehicle. Use a bright distress flag or your hazard lights to draw attention to your vehicle.
- If trapped in a blizzard, clear your tail pipe and run your engine and heater for 10 minutes every hour. Open your window slightly.
- During night hours, keep the dome light on in the car so rescue crews can see your vehicle.
- Make sure your vehicle disaster preparedness kit is well stocked and readily available.

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Preparing for Floods

Floods are the most common and widespread of all natural disasters. Remember that the sheer force of just six inches of swiftly moving water can knock people off their feet. Cars are easily swept away in just two feet of water.

Know the difference between a “Flood Watch” and a “Flood Warning.”

A Flood Watch

A Flood Watch is issued by the National Weather Service when flooding is possible within the designated watch area — be alert!

A Flood Warning

A Flood Warning is issued when flooding has been reported or is imminent — take necessary precautions.

What to do Before a Flood

- Purchase flood insurance.
- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio for current information.
- Keep your car filled with gas.
- Plan for evacuation. Know where you are going and how to get there.

- Take steps to flood-proof your home. Call your local building department or office of emergency management for information.
- Keep all insurance policies and your household inventory in a safe place.
- Take photos or a videotape of your belongings in the home.

What to do During a Flood

- Don't try to walk or drive through flooded areas.
- Stay away from moving water. Moving water six inches deep can sweep you off your feet.
- Stay away from disaster areas unless authorities ask for volunteers.
- Stay away from downed power lines.

- Be aware of areas where flood waters may have receded and may have weakened road surfaces.
- Don't throw damaged goods away until an official inventory has been taken.
- Throw away all food that has come in contact with flood waters.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water if you come in contact with flood waters.

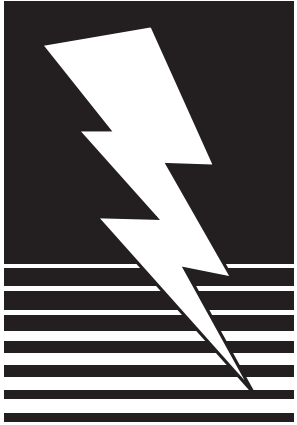
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Preparing for Tornadoes and Lightning

Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air that descend in a funnel shape and form during the early stages of rapidly developing thunderstorms.

The best protection during a tornado is in an interior room on the lowest level of a building, preferably a basement or storm cellar.

Tornadoes

- Turn on your radio, NOAA Weather Radio, or TV to monitor “Watches” and “Warnings.”
- Identify your shelter room (such as the basement, storm cellar, or an interior room).
- When a tornado warning is issued, seek shelter immediately.
- Stay away from windows, doors, or outside walls.
- Do not open the windows.
- If there is no shelter, lie flat in a ditch with hands covering your head.
- Avoid buildings with wide span roofs.

- If in your vehicle, stop the vehicle, get out and seek shelter in a ditch.
- Stay sheltered until the “All Clear” is sounded.

Lightning

Monitor weather before all outdoor activities. If lightning is forecast or present, observe the following precaution.

- Stay indoors.
- Avoid plumbing fixtures and appliances.
- Do not use faucets or showers.
- In a car: stay in the car until the storm passes.
- In a boat: go to shore immediately.
- In the forest: get out if possible. If that is not possible, go to a lower level area under low, thick tree growth.
- In an open area: go to a lower area, crouch (do not lie flat).

- Avoid steel reinforced concrete buildings, and metal objects.
- Avoid hilltops, beaches, small structures in open areas and open water.
- If your hair stands on end (an indicator that lightning will strike), drop to your knees, bend forward, put your hands on your knees (do not lie flat).
- Do not congregate or huddle with other people. Spread out.
- Do not use the phone or other electrical equipment.

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